Earthquakes

REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D. D.
Minister
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
Post and Mason Streets
San Francisco

SEE PAGE ELEVEN

PULPIT QUOTATIONS

"God of our fathers, known of old,
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine,
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

"We did not know what we were playing,
Or what we were dreaming then;
But we struck one chord of music
Like the sound of a great Amen.

"It flooded the crimson twilight
Like the close of an angel psalm;
And it lay on the fevered spirit
With a touch of infinite calm."

"We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams;
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world forever, it seems."

Why Does God Permit Great Calamities?

If there is any question in these days, asked with more persistence than another, it is the one which we have announced for our consideration this morning, namely: "Why does God permit calamities and disasters?" Startling incidents, found recorded on the pages of our daily newspapers bring the question to our lips again and again. Every day furnishes a disaster and every month a calamity and the heart answers "Why?" Why pain? Why disease? Why sorrow? Why trouble? Why could not the universe have been created perfect?

We begin our discourse this morning with a few general considerations. First, there is the foundation of all truth and logic, namely, God must be right and just and true. The universe is founded on law, law is an expression for order, order is founded on justice and righteousness. If God were not just, this world would not hold together for an hour.

There is a profound truth expressed in the words of Paul:—"Let God be true and every man a liar." A second consideration leads us to remark that in such a universe as the one in which we live, it would be impossible for us to have love without anxiety, light without darkness, pleasure without pain, heights without depths, mountain without valley, and good without evil. A material and physical universe such as ours must be marked by certain natural limitations.

A third reflection leads us to remark that while disasters do occur nature is absolutely democratic in its mode of evolution. Floods do not skip the rich man's house, the lightning flash does not avoid the church, cyclones do not turn out in order to avoid the theological seminary, and last of all, man never loses faith in God notwithstanding all the strange incidents of his life. When the flood sweeps over the city we build a sea wall. When an earthquake shakes the neighborhood we build an edifice which is earthquake-proof. Men still build their homes at the base of Etna and Vesuvius. If every church in the city of San Francisco were struck with lightning tomorrow morning, the good people of California would be found going to church next Sunday as usual.

We have introduced our theme with these few brief generalizations in order to open the way for that which we regard to be the

strongest statement to be presented in this discourse, namely that 99 per cent of the evil in the world is due to the carelessness and indifference of man, the responsibility for which can in no way be laid at the feet of the Creator. If you could wipe out all the evil for which man is responsible, the world would be a paradise.

Natural calamities are few and far between. There are scores of people in this building this morning who were never struck by lightning, damaged by a flood, swept by a cyclone or disturbed by an earthquake.

There are a thousand accidents for which no sane person would hold the Almighty responsible. We read of a railroad accident, but God never built a railroad. We hear of a mine accident, but God never dug a mine. We are told of the elevator accident, but God never constructed an elevator. We have witnessed an automobile accident, but God never invented an automobile. Our evening paper records an accident by way of an exploding boiler, but a boiler is not a divine institution. If men build a railroad track beneath an overhanging rock—which rolls down by reason of the vibration caused by the passing train—is God responsible? Did God order the construction of the track in that particular neighborhood?

We repeat that for 99 per cent of the evil in this world, man is responsible and not

God; man and not the devil, man and not blind fate, man and not Providence. All the earthquakes, floods and cyclones of history would not equal the shame, pain, and agony —the sorrow and confusion of one hundred years of bloodshed and crucifixions in the arena of the Coliseum of Rome.

The three great curses of the world have been war, famine and pestilence, and man is responsible for all three. The earth is full of food, war is the incarnation of human hate, and pestilence simply marks man's ignorance of natural law.

Why does man permit hunger, ignorance, disease, poverty, drunkenness, war and the white slave traffic? Here you have 99 per cent of your questions answered.

Hunger, unnecessary hunger, has been the great curse of history. Hunger opens the door for war, famine and pestilence. War was born when men began to fight for food, and pestilence feeds on bodies which have been deprived of their proper nutriment.

Famine? Why there is food enough in the marriage of the sun and sod to feed twenty billion people. Famine means ignorance. The manhood of our Christian civilization knows enough today to make a famine in the future absolutely impossible. Children go to school without breakfast, and our cold storage vaults are packed with food a year

old. Why does God permit famine, hunger and nakedness? God permits man, and man permits evil. This is our answer.

But still you ask: "Could not God have created a world without pain?"—"Why does God permit such natural woes as cyclones, earthquakes, lightnings and floods?" Why? Just to create that "Why?" All knowledge begins with a question. Hunger — Why? Thirst—Why? Desire—Why? Loneliness—Why? Trouble—Why? Pain—Why? Death —Why? The most startling thing in the universe is death—but for death man would never have tried to think out the great thought of immortality.

So our first answer is this—God permits evil and trouble in order to compel men to think. The race of men is intellectually lazy. Man has never been guilty of thought, serious thought, until circumstances have compelled him to think.

In the second place God has placed us in this world in order to learn the lessons of universal life. We are not here for pleasure, but for instruction. Men must learn. Nations must learn. Civilizations must learn. The race must be educated. We must ask our own questions and answer them, too. God is not going to tell us a thing which we can find out for ourselves. God robes Himself in silence. We must learn the lesson of life. God will wait ten million years, but humanity will come, by its own will and volition, up to the

divine standard. Perhaps it is worth one hundred human lives that men should learn and understand that a rotten beam in a splendid building will cause disaster. God waits for humanity to learn. Neither angel or spirit can speed the progress. There has never been one step taken for the advancement of humanity that humanity did not take that step. The race must work out its own salvation with fear and trembling.

The main lesson of life, is wrapped up in one sentence, namely: The universe is governed by law.

Why does God permit your child to fall down stairs? Why does he not interfere? The answer is clear, your child has been born into the universe of law. If God reversed the law of gravitation in order to save your child the whole universe would go to pieces. The law that hurts you is the law which will help you if you will simply obey it.

The fire which burns your building, cooks your food, warms your house, melts your iron, molds your steel, lights your building, speeds your train and illuminates your city.

Would you vote to give up electricity, because the lightning strikes the earth occasionally? Would man ever have discovered electricity if it had not been for the lightning flash?

Another thought—The vital thing in the mind of God, is evidently not the protection of the individual, but the protection of the race. God has placed the human race in this world to subdue and conquer. The victory of the race is of vastly more importance than the life and pleasure of the individual. The universe exists for humanity and not for any individual unit.

The mother passes into the child, the child into the individual, the individual into the clan, the clan into the tribe, the tribe into the nation, the nation into the civilization and civilization into history. The civilizations of the past have lived for us.

You live and suffer for the race. Your present loss will mean a future gain. Your reward will be an eternal character. This is the meaning of martyrdom. Ingersoll affirmed that the martyrs were fools. From which we infer that even though he was the incarnation of good nature, he did not possess one ounce of the heroism which produces a martyr. The individual must live for the race. The present must be sacrificed to the future. The lower must bend to the higher. For your present loss there is an eternal gain. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

And then again—character must be developed by struggle and conflict. Congenial cir-

cumstances never develop a strong character. Guarantee a man a long life and no pain, with every pleasure and satisfaction of life as sure as the law of gravitation, and his soul would cease to grow. Give your preacher a life-call and a good salary, and nine times out of ten he will give you a poor sermon. Churches which are endowed are said to be the churches which are in doubt. It is the men who are sure of winning the victory who lose the battle. Conflict produces character, and character is more than pain, disease, trouble or death.

Again—We are living in a universe where nothing is fixed. Astronomers talk about fixed stars. There are no fixed stars. Nothing is fixed. There is only one thing certain in the universe and that is the universal uncertainty of all things. The poet's suggestion—"Change and decay in all around I see" is in harmony with the experiences of science and history. Childhood passes into youth, youth into maturity, maturity into old age, and ignorance into knowledge; matter is on its way to spirit and the soul is on its way to God. There is nothing fixed or certain beneath the stars. "Here we have no continuing city."

Some poor mechanic may, at this hour, be working in cellar or garret, whose invention will turn your business into bankruptcy inside of the next twelve months. The massive warships of the world may, inside of two decades, be turned into useless scrap-iron by the miracle of an atmospherical warship which will drop damnation and perdition down into fort and galley. This is an uncertain world. God has given us fair warning. To every man He says, "move on!" To every generation He utters the same command, "move on!" "move on!" Seven thousand years of floods, earthquakes, cyclones and lightnings bid us to take warning.

The eagle stirs up her nest and Providence will not permit humanity to believe that earth is the last station on the road of life. And last of all, let us emphasize the fact that —the great law of the universe is sacrifice—the sacrifice of the present to the future, of the lower to the higher and of the material to the spiritual. It is a law of the universe that every lower realm must be sacrificed to the realm next higher. Every sign post in the universe says "Look Beyond!" I have little respect for the man who tells me that I must preach "a gospel for the present." As well try to paint a mountain without a skyline as to preach a gospel without a future. A religion without a future is no better than a business without a future. Let it be forever remembered that from the divine standpoint death, pain, disease and all the accidents and incidents of time and sense are absolutely insignificant compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us — "for the things

which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The main thing in every plan is not the process but the result. GOD HAS A PLAN! The knowledge of that fact is enough.

There is a spark of divine life in the heart of each one of us which no cyclone can reach, no tornado can touch, no catastrophe harm, no accident hurt and no incident affect. "He shall cover thee with his feathers and underneath His wings shalt thou trust."

If I have not answered to your satisfaction the question: "Why Does God Permit Calamities and Disasters?" may I ask you a question—"Will the finite ever be able to comprehend the Infinite?" Can a father explain himself to his child?

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 1925

First Congregational Church

Post and Mason Streets, San Francisco, California

Telephones:
Administration Department, Kearny 7862 and 7863
Rear Corridor, Kearny 6669

REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D. D., Minister
Residence, Clift Hotel

UDA WALDROP, Organist and Musical Director

MORNING WORSHIP 11 O'CLOCK

Sittings Reserved Until 11 o'Clock

Prelude . . . . . Selected
Doxology and Invocation
Hymn
Contralto Solo—"The Voice in the Wilderness" . Scott
EMMA MESOW FITCH
Scripture Lesson
Prayer
Offertory—Organ Solo . . . . . Selected
EDGAR A. THORPE
Hymn
Sermon—"The Case for Evolution"
REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D. D.
Contralto Solo—"Consider" . . . . . Jacobs
EMMA MESOW FITCH
Hymn
Benediction
Postlude . . . . . Selected

EVENING WORSHIP 7:45 O'CLOCK

Sittings Reserved Until 7:30 o'Clock

Favorite Melodies . . . . . Selected
EDGAR A. THORPE
Hymn
Scripture Lesson
Baritone Solo . . . . . Selected
E. HAROLD DANA
Prayer
Prayer
Offertory—Organ Solo . . . . . Selected
EDGAR A. THORPE
Hymn
Question Drawer
REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D. D.
Hymn
Benediction
Postlude . . . . . Selected

EVENTS OF THE WEEK

YOUNG PEOPLE—SPECIAL

All young people of the city are invited to attend the meeting of the Christian Endeavor Society at 6 o'clock this evening. Grace Clendenning, Chairman of the Outdoor Recreation Committee, will speak on "God's Friendliness as Expressed in Nature." Special music will be provided by Mr. Rosa. The social half-hour will follow the meeting. Everyone is invited to join the Young People outside the church August 2d, at 1:30, to go to the Relief Home or Marine Hospital, as he or she may elect.

THE TENNESSEE CASE

Mr. Fred G. Athearn, San Francisco attorney, prominent in East Bay Civic Affairs, will speak Sunday morning, August 9th, at 9:45 o'clock in Judge Wilbur's Public Welfare Class, Mrs. Minerva N. Swain, presiding. His subject will be "The Tennessee Law and the Scopes Conviction."

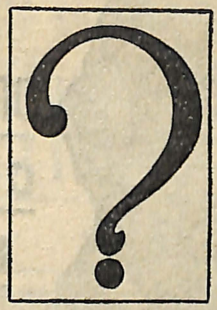
THE PRINCE

Prince J. E. Blayechettai of Abyssinia, East Africa, will speak Friday Evening, August 7th, assisted by colored singers and entertainers.

CALENDAR NOTICES

All publicity material for next Sunday and the week following should be mailed tomorrow (Monday) afternoon, directed to Miss Dema E. Dunckel, 432 Mason Street.

TONIGHT'S QUESTIONS—Dr. Gordon



1—What did the birth-date and horoscope of Mr. Bryan foretell?

2—How can a suffering wife break the bad habits of a good husband?

3—What has become of Dorothy Ellingson?

4—Does the Jew belong to a super-race?

5—Does a divorced woman make a desirable wife?

6—What Catholic papers do you read?

7—"My husband threatens suicide—what shall I do?"

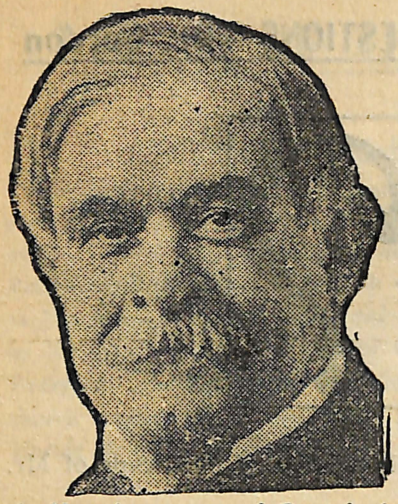
8—Has it been discovered that Gladstone was an immoral man?

9—When a man is a failure at fifty—what then?

10—Would Luther have attained a higher place in history if he had not married?

11—Who has had the greater influence—Brisbane or Bryan?

12—Why do you not answer the criticisms of your critics?



WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 5th
7:45 P. M.

DR. GORDON'S CURRENT EVENTS CLASS

1—Has the success of Organized Labor queered Socialism?
2—Why does a sick man like Debs outlive a strong man like Bryan?
3—Why are so many of our great men dying?
4—Has not Science proved that our earth has "come to an end" a number of times?
5—What really caused the death of Mr. Bryan?
6—Has the legal profession "lost caste" in the United States?
7—Why do college students desire to commit "a perfect crime"?
8—Does "face lifting" really beautify the feminine features?
9—Is stealing ever justifiable?
10—How will the death of Mr. Bryan affect the Evolution discussion?
11—Has Prohibition increased the use of drugs?
12—What was the secret of Bryan's success?

TWENTY ONE QUESTIONS

First Congregational Church
Post and Mason Sts.
MAIN AUDITORIUM

Current Events Class

Conducted by
REV. JAMES L. GORDON, D. D.
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5th
7:30 to 9:30 P. M.

PROGRAM

1. Chimes and Echo Organ.
2. Question Drawer....See Other Side
3. Booklet—Free Distribution
'THE CASE FOR EVOLUTION'
4. Motion Pictures.....2 Reels
5. Book Distribution.....100 Books
6. This Coupon Is Good for a Number

Keep your eye on THIS number when the list is read.

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No. 3139

First Congregational Church
Post and Mason Sts. MAIN AUDITORIUM

THURSDAY AUG. 6 7:30 P.M.

DR. GORDON'S
FAMILY GATHERING No. 88

MOTION DRAMA

"The LIGHTHOUSE BY THE SEA"

With a Great All Star Cast

ADMIT TWO

First Congregational Church
Post and Mason Sts. MAIN AUDITORIUM

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ADMIT TWO

DR. GORDON'S BOOK

THOUGHTS ON LARGE THEMES

THE WEIGHT OF A WORD. By James L. Gordon, D. D. New York and Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company; $1.50.

Fourteen Sunday morning talks delivered by Dr. Gordon in the First Congregational Church of San Francisco compose this book. It takes its name from the fact that each sermon had a title consisting of a single word. These one-word titles are used as the chapter headings of the book.

From the standpoint of universal interest, Dr. Gordon has chosen his themes well. He has resolutely entered the same field that engrossed the speculations of such philosophers as Aristotle, Kant and Bacon. The whole field of knowledge and opinion is Dr. Gordon's oyster, and he has intrepidly essayed to open it to the view of the man on the street. If his reasonings are less profound than those of the philosophers, they at least result in more conclusions. No reader that has an iota of the faith possessed by Dr. Gordon can read "The Weight of a Word" without gaining new beliefs.

The reviewer was particularly struck by Dr. Gordon's treatment of astrology. "Modern astrology," he says, "is an attempt to give a spiritual interpretation to astronomy." Here, it seems, is a definition that affords the basis for a reconciliation between religion and science.—"The Argonaut."

DR. GORDON'S BOOK IS ON SALE AT THE LEADING BOOK STORES

QUESTIONS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5th

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First Congregational Church

Rev. James L. Gordon, Minister

Ernest H. Dettner, Chairman in Charge

"The LIGHTHOUSE BY THE SEA"

The famous comedy queen, Louise Fazenda, will have the starring female role in "The Lighthouse by the Sea," the new Warner Classic. Rin-Tin-Tin will play opposite her in this photoplay.

Vicious evil, pathetic old age, blossoming love that wavers between sham and reality, and the courageous truth of youth are the ingredients of Mr. Davis' play, which centers around the uncanny way in which Rin-Tin-Tin saves the day, thus destroying a malignant force of rum-runners and uniting two lovers in the steady shine of the "Lighthouse by the Sea," that beacon of steadfastness.

Louise Fazenda portrays the devoted daughter of a blind lighthouse keeper, whose infatuation for a dapper stranger almost wrecks the lighthouse, her father and the boy she really loves.

JOHN G. VOGEL, at the Organ

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JOHN G. VOGEL, at the Organ

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MUSICAL PROGRAM
FOR THE
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
OF SAN FRANCISCO
THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 6th, 7:30 to 8
Through Courtesy of
KOHLER & CHASE

I

ORGAN—In Summer ..... Stebbins
THEODORE STRONG, Organist

II

VOCAL—(a) Phillis Has Such Charming Graces ..... Wilson
(b) For You Alone ..... Geehl
EASTON KENT, Tenor

III

PIANO—La Campanella ..... Liszt-Busoni
Re-enactment of the playing of JOSEF LHEVINNE
Knabe Ampico Grand Piano

IV

VOCAL—(a) The Trees Have Grown So ..... Burleigh
(b) The Moon Drops Low ..... Cadman
EASTON KENT, Tenor

V

PIANO—(a) Troika ..... Tschaikowsky
Re-enactment of the playing of
SERGEI RACHMANINOFF
(b) Naila Waltz ..... Dohnanyi-Delibes
Re-enactment of the playing of

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